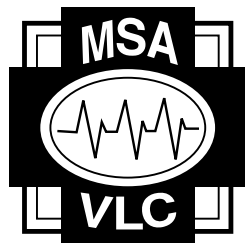


VIETNAM LAOS CAMBODIA



MEDICAL & SCIENTIFIC AID NEWS BULLETIN

No. 143 - August 2005

50p

FORTY YEARS OF PRACTICAL ASSISTANCE



British Friendship Hospital, Ky Anh District, Ha Tinh Province

2005 is a very important year to us: 12th June will be the fortieth anniversary of the foundation of the Medical Aid Committee for Vietnam and it was very shortly after this, with President Johnson's "death and devastation" speech on 29th July, that the public became aware of the US military involvement in Vietnam, although this had commenced some years before and was, indeed, the reason for MACV's existence: to get medicines and medical equipment to the Vietnamese people in the areas which were suffering aerial and naval bombardment.

During the war, our support included medicines, medical equipment, books and journals, blood plasma, babies' clothing (knitted in dark colours since light ones attracted attack). When the

war ended in 1975, we had expected to gradually close down but found that our support was needed as much as ever because of the stringent economic embargo imposed by the USA and its allies and even included medical supplies. This was not lifted until the mid-nineties.

October 2005 will see the twenty-fifth anniversary of the opening of the British Friendship Hospital at Ky Anh, Ha Tinh Province, replacing the District Hospital which had been destroyed by bombing during the war. We have maintained close links with the hospital, giving as much material and financial support as possible, endowing beds in memory of friends and families, and a number of medical students have spent their "electives" there.

Over the years, we have continued to give our support mainly to primary health projects and, in general, in response to specific requests. We have responded to many emergency appeals (such as for victims of flooding). We support a post-graduate scholarship for a medical scientist and projects in Laos and Cambodia as well as Vietnam (thus the change in our title from MACV to MSAVLC). We have also funded a number of major projects such as the current programme to combat and eventually eliminate trachoma in Thanh Hoa Province.

It is interesting to look through our old Bulletins and read about exactly what we have been doing during all these years and this issue includes some of the highlights.

Bulletin No. 10 (July/August 1969)
announced that the first £100,000 had been raised for medical supplies, larger sums as the result of social events in various places and smaller ones (£1 or less) from individual adults and children. It also carried news of the visit to the UK of Mme. Nguyen Thi Binh, who had come over at Easter from the Paris Peace Talks, where she was representing the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam.

Bulletin No 65 (November 1985)
St. Helens Council had agreed to sponsor and co-ordinate a fund-raising campaign for 100 additional beds at the British Friendship Hospital at Ky Anh. Launch of a Campaign for Vietnamese Victims of Chemical War (mostly men and women exposed to “Agent Orange” with which the forests of the south had been extensively sprayed.)

Bulletin No. 70 (February 1987)
An issue devoted entirely to the British Friendship Hospital – from its planning in 1969 to its opening in 1980 and the plans for the new 100-bed wing.

Bulletin No. 71 (May 1987)
Extension of medical aid to Cambodia and Laos.

Bulletin No. 72 (August 1987)
carried an article about the **many tons** of medical books and journals sent to Vietnam over twenty years by Dr. Philip Harvey.

Bulletin No. 78 (February 1989)
Successful conclusion of the Mother and Child Campaign (launched in 1987 to give support to midwifery training in Laos and Cambodia and equipment for Cervical Cancer Screening programme in the south of Vietnam, organised by the Tu Dzu Hospital in Ho Chi Minh City.) £41,500 had been raised.

A post-graduate research scholarship for a Vietnamese medical scientist had been established at the North-East Wales Institute of Higher Education with Dr. Glenn Morris. The first scholar, Mr. Buu Mat, Head of the Immunology Department of the Blood Transfusion Centre in Ho Chi Minh City, had learned technology for manufacturing reagents needed for testing for Hepatitis B and

Haemorrhagic Dengue Fever. Dr. Morris wrote: “When we go to Vietnam next week, we will take enough antibodies for 40,000 tests which will enable the Blood Transfusion Centre to test ALL their blood donations for six months. **If commercial kits were used, they would cost over £40,000.**”

Bulletin No. 79 (May 1989)
carried articles about a visit by a small group to Vietnam and, in particular, to their meeting with Nguyen and Duc, twin boys born joined at the pelvis and sharing various organs. They had been separated successfully in 1988 (when they were eight-and-a-half years old) after an operation lasting more than fourteen hours. **Although half the world’s news representatives were present, no report of this remarkable achievement appeared in our press.**

Bulletin No. 81 (November 1989)
carried the sad news of the death of Dr. Joan McMichael-Askins and some of the tributes which had flooded in.

Bulletin No. 82 (February 1990)
The horrendous tragedy of the Pol Pot years in Cambodia was highlighted on the front cover by a photograph of some of the 10,000 skeletons found in just one mass grave. Professor Shellard, who had visited Cambodia in 1983, wrote:

“It was John Pilger in September 1979 who roused the anger of the British people to what had been going on in that country from 1975 until the Vietnamese helped the Cambodian people to restore some form of order. It should never be forgotten that it was the Vietnamese people who, despite shortages of rice themselves at the time, made great sacrifices to send rice to feed the people of Cambodia, which undoubtedly saved the lives of thousands of Cambodian children. And it should never be forgotten that, between May 1975 and July 1978, thousands of Cambodians fled into Vietnam as refugees. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees put the number as 320,000.

“In November 1989, John Pilger’s latest film ‘Cambodia – Year 10’ was shown on TV. Some of the shots showed babies and children dying from malnutrition and diarrhoea and lying on

the floor in the corridors of hospitals because all beds were occupied. MSAVLC immediately arranged to send oral rehydration sachets to the value of £5000 by air to Phnom Penh. We also invited 50 supporters to write to their local newspapers appealing for urgent donations to MSAVLC. We were able to send a second batch, making our total commitment £10,000.”

Bulletin No. 84 (August 1990)
celebrated twenty-five years of medical aid and announced the publication of a booklet by Professor Shellard: “Twenty-five Years of Devoted Service”.

Bulletin No. 85 (November 1990)
besides giving follow-up reports on the training of midwives in Laos, the post-graduate research scholarship at NEWI and the distribution of oral rehydration sachets in Cambodia, gave an account of the cream teas, served by Judith Hobbs and Rex Gibson in their lovely garden in Snowhill every week-end in the summer. Since starting this venture they had raised over £12,000.

Bulletin No. 86 (February 1991)
The proposal to establish an artificial limb project, using the Jaipur Limb, was outlined and news given of a sponsored 1,500 miles bicycle ride from Hanoi to Phnom Penh by two mountain bicycle enthusiasts, to raise money for this project.

Bulletin No. 88 (August 1991)
The proposal to establish a Friendship Village, supported by British, French, German, Japanese and US veterans, on the outskirts of Hanoi was outlined. This was the “brainchild” of George Mizo, an American veteran. The village would be for old people and orphaned children who had lost their entire families. MSAVLC had agreed to give support to equipping the medical centre.

There was also an account of the “Bicycle Trail”.

Bulletin No.89 (November 1991)
Mr. Trinh Ngoc Trinh, Director of the Highland Educational Development Organisation (HEDO), a non-governmental organisation founded to raise standards of health and education

among the ethnic minority tribes in the mountainous areas of Vietnam, had contacted MSAVLC concerning malnutrition in these areas

Bulletin No.90 (February 1992)

Besides describing the visit to Laos and Vietnam by EC members and others, it carried an article about artemisinin which, like quinine, is an anti-malarial chemical obtained from a plant, in this case *artemisia annua*, which grows widely in Vietnam. It is more potent than quinine and has fewer unpleasant side-effects. MSAVLC had, for some years, supplied quinine to four hospitals but decided to send the money instead to the institutions researching and producing artemisinin, on condition that they send equivalent supplies of artemisinin to these hospitals, thus “killing two birds with one stone”.

Bulletin No. 95 (May 1993)

published our new logo, designed by James Lacey, a fifth year pupil at Woodlands Boys' School in Coventry.

Bulletin No 96 (August 1993)

announced the setting up of the Jaipur Limb Project

Bulletin No. 97 (November 1993)

gave the joyful news that the £30,000 needed to launch the Jaipur Limb Project had been received, with a further £30,000 a few days later – £20,000 from the Baring Foundation and £10,000 from the States of Jersey Overseas Aid Committee

Bulletin No. 102 (February 1995)

carried four important news items: the start of training of Vietnamese technicians by two trainers from Jaipur; the opening of the primary health clinic at Giao Sang (near the Chinese border) in Lai Chau Province, which local people had built and MSAVLC had equipped (a HEDO initiative); the launch of an appeal for £10,000 to repair 800 cases of hare lip in Thanh Hoa Province; and a report by three medical students of their “elective” spent at Ky Anh..

Bulletin No.103 (May 1995)

It was announced that Dame Judi Dench had accepted our invitation to

become our President, in succession to Professor Dorothy Hodgkin who had died in July 1994.

Bulletin No. 110 (February 1997)

was almost entirely given over to Dr. Nguyen Dinh Lan's visit to the UK following his retirement as Director of the British Friendship Hospital.

Bulletin No. 111 (May 1997)

gave an account of our cooperation with the Wound Healing Institute at the Churchill Hospital in Oxford to enable a scientist from the Institute of Traditional Medicine in Hanoi to complete an important piece of research on the effect on wound healing of a traditional Vietnamese preparation; there was also a report on the presentation to the ENT Centre, Ho Chi Minh City, of a screener for brain stem evoked responses donated by MSAVLC (*the beginning of our relationship with Dr. Glyn Vaughan*).

Bulletin No. 114 (February 1998)

Dr. Nguyen Dinh Lan had suggested that a Dr. Joan McMichael-Askins should be established, so that future generations of staff at the British Friendship Hospital should know of her immense contribution to the work of the hospital. The first recipients were announced in this Bulletin.

Bulletin No. 117 (November 1998)

described the “Glostavent”, a sturdy anaesthetic machine developed by an anaesthetist with experience of and sympathy for medical services in “third world” countries, with every possible emergency anticipated and provided for. Any servicing can be done by the hospital or clinic, the cost is a fraction of that of other machines and it is very economical to run. MSAVLC had sent one to Thanh Hoa Provincial Hospital (*and later sent six more – four paid for by the British embassy*); this Bulletin also carried an article by Glyn Vaughan about the enormous problem of deafness in children in Laos

It was also announced in this Bulletin that we would be supporting the project in Thanh Hoa to combat trachoma, despite having been unsuccessful in our bid for a grant from the National Lottery.

Bulletin No. 120 (August 1999)

Our second application for Lottery funding had been successful and we had been awarded £93,500 over four years.

A nine-year-old boy, resident at Thanh Xuan Peace Village, Hanoi, born with deficient lower limbs (right thigh only and left thigh, knee and partial shin) had been fitted with Jaipur limbs and was learning to walk for the first time, having been in a wheel chair since early childhood.

Bulletin No. 121 (November 1999)

announced that we should be supporting a modest audiology programme in Pakse, Champasak Province, Laos.

Bulletin No. 127 (February 2001)

The first training course in modern methods for “traditional” midwives (who had learned their skills from their mothers and grandmothers) took place in Tuyen Quang Province and the British embassy had provided bicycles. This Bulletin also gave the reasons why it was necessary to discontinue the Jaipur Limb Project – the only project which had not been successful; and it gave details of the implementation of the anti-trachoma project, which was entirely satisfactory.

Bulletin No. 127a (May 2001)

A visit to the Morning Star Centre for Handicapped Children, described in this Bulletin, helped to counteract the sadness felt with the demise of the Jaipur Limb Project. The Centre – the first in Vietnam – has many children with disabilities associated with parental exposure to toxic chemicals such as Agent Orange and needed equipment for early detection and differential diagnosis of visual, hearing and nervous system impairment and the cost of this equipment was slightly less than the money reserved for future development of the limb project.

The Bulletin also carried a satisfactory report on progress at the Pakse audiology clinic.

Bulletin No. 129 (November 2001)

reported that MSAVLC had agreed to support the Cambodian Health Committee's TB community education programme in Chantrea, Svay Rieng

Province, which treats tuberculosis in the community, using Home Care/Direct Observation Treatment (DOT) method, which has been found to be successful, with a cure rate of 98% and almost 100% compliance.

Bulletin No. 133 (November 2002)
– an issue concentrating on Children and War – carried some notable statements:

Dr. Joan McMichael, in 1969: “Should this terrible war end, the need for medical aid will continue”

The Declaration published at the end of the Environmental Conference in July 2002: “Wars do not end when the bombs stop falling and the fighting stops. The devastation continues long after, in the land and in the minds and bodies of the people. Years have passed since the conclusion of the wars that for decades tormented Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam; but throughout the region, innocent victims are still suffering.”

It was following the preparation of this Bulletin that it was decided to reprint, in a limited edition, the booklet “Children of Vietnam”, first published in 1969.

But, as well as lasting suffering, Bulletin 133 told of steadily reducing incidence of trachoma in Thanh Hoa – from nearly 11% to below 5%.

Copies of any of the above-mentioned Bulletins can be had from the Hon. Secretary.

OBITUARIES

We were sorry to learn of the deaths of
Mr. D. H. Emmott of Sheffield,
Miss K. Rose, of Bodham Holt,
Norfolk
and Professor N. H. Wilkins, FRS.
All had supported MSAVLC for many years and we send our heart-felt sympathy to their families and friends.

VITAL WORK BY KY ANH BLIND ASSOCIATION



At the Blind Association Ky Anh District

As reported in Bulletin 142, we had responded to a request from Dr. Nguyem Dinh Lan to fund some courses in basic hygiene for blind women who had not, like sighted women, been able to attend the courses arranged by the District Health Authorities and, when Susmita Ghosh and I visited Ky Anh Blind Association in November last year, we presented the promised £800.

We have just received the following letter (dated 4/5/05) from the Chairman, Mr. Tran Anh Thi:

“I am pleased to inform you that we have completed the first training course for the blind women with the collaboration between the Blind Association, the Women’s Union and the hospital.” The number attending was 20 persons. The training programme started on 14th April and lasted seven days.

Then followed details of the programme, which included psychopathology and the abilities of the blind; the role and position of women in society; characteristics of women at puberty and the menopause; menstruation and pregnancy and what women need to do at such times; how to care for the new-born, including breast feeding and bottle feeding; and

an afternoon of practice; common gynae-cological diseases, causes and protection; common ophthalmic diseases and what we have to do to take care of the eye (especially for the blind); common diseases in summer and winter and how to prevent these; personal hygiene, including brushing teeth correctly; population policy and family planning, methods of contraception and sterilisation; vaccination of children and regular dental check-ups.

The course ended with a closing ceremony with awards, trainees’ speeches, and, during the evening, singing and reading of poems.

Mr. Tran Anh Thi concludes his letter “At the closing ceremony, many trainees showed their good impression and their thanks to the Association and the organisation which funded the course. We are planning to organise continuously two further courses and complete them by the end of May.

“Once again, on behalf of the Executive Committee of the Blind Association of Ky Anh District and all the trainees, I would like to convey our sincere thanks to all members of MSAVLC.”

Madeleine Sharp

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